

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 116 232

CS 202 425

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TITLE MADD About Good Books.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English (65th, San Diego, California, November 26-29, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Art; *Childrens Books; Childrens Literature; *Creative Activities; Dance; Drama; Elementary Education; *Enrichment Programs; *Literature Appreciation; Music; Summer Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Arts Impact Program; Ohio (Columbus)

ABSTRACT

The MADD (music, art, dance, and drama) About Good Books program is a summer Arts Impact program for students in grades 3-6 offered by the Columbus, Ohio Public Schools. Conducted by two literature teachers, the 1975 summer program got under way as the children set the stage by constructing a large tree, for reading and chatting under, and erecting a white picket fence, for advertising favorite books with graffiti. Books were then introduced, discussed, and read. An arts focus helped the entire group to share books through slide making, dance interpretations, character portrayals, and musical representations of characters and themes. The process can easily be adapted to a single teacher classroom. (A list of popular book titles is included.) (JH)

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MADD* About Good Books

"Nikki's enthusiasm about the MADD Course says it all. She enjoyed it thoroughly, not just the new books, but the many new ways of responding to them. Each day when I picked her up, she would relate excitedly what took place that morning. As a parent I was delighted by her response to a fun learning experience. I only wish this kind of excitement could happen more throughout the entire school year"

"This summer has been the most positive experience Mark has ever had in school. He doesn't think of his time here as school. He has told all of his friends how neat it is. From our point of view, it is well worth the time and effort to drive him across town to class. Wouldn't school be great if this kind of approach could be used all year"

"It's so great to see the children creating and making words, music, art, drama and movement all their own. We also enjoyed sharing the books at home--especially 'Mrs. Frankweiler.' Robie responded to it all--but loved the music and being able to 'act out' the most. I felt the growth happened for Robie in the feeling that what he contributed to the group was worthwhile--that he was 'O.K.' and could accomplish anything--the feeling of 'I can' --a terrific thing"

These comments are representative of the feelings parents have about the MADD program. Although we didn't record the students' remarks, their tendency to come early and stay late indicates a similar feeling!

The MADD About Good Books program is a summer Arts Impact program for students in grades three through six offered by the Columbus (Ohio) Public Schools. The 1975 Summer was its second year, and it's sure to grow!

Arts Impact is a model program which uses the arts as the core of the curriculum. In 1969 Columbus was one of the five

* (Music, Art, Dance, Drama)

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original sites in the country involved in Arts Impact. At that time, two elementary schools participated. It was a federally funded two-year project which has now become part of twelve Columbus elementary schools and is paid for out of general school funds.

During the regular school year, an Arts Impact team travels between two elementary schools and acts as a resource for classroom teachers. The team consists of a visual arts teacher, a music teacher, a dance teacher and a drama teacher.

The summer MADD About Good Books program adds two literature teachers to the team and is built entirely around the joy of reading memorable books.

During the past two summers our program was held at two locations. Joan Webb and I were the school-based literature teachers. The other members of our team, who traveled back and forth between our classes were Louella Hofsteter, music; Kay Paisley, drama; Ken Valimaki, visual Arts, and Linda Roberts, dance.

The goals of the MADD program include:

- exposing children to a great deal of literature
- helping children interpret and respond to literature
- teaching children basic form and structure of literature
- giving children insight into the creation and creators of books
- allowing children to explore the various arts areas both in response to literature and as disciplines

We have realized these goals with a variety of planned and spontaneous experiences in the arts. Both sessions have begun by changing the classroom into a more exciting environment. This summer we used A Tree is Nice (Udry) to set the stage for sculpting a large tree out of cloth and foam. This tree then formed the center of the classroom and made a cozy place for chatting, sharing or reading. Then we added an expanse of white picket fence to the room. The "white wash scene" from Tom Sawyer (Twain) stimulated the building and soon we had a wonderful place for advertising favorite books with graffiti.

Next we began introducing books, books, books from our huge wall of book shelves. Every morning we shared books, told stories, recounted anecdotes about authors and illustrators and generally tried to familiarize our students with books that they might want to read. Most of the books we introduced were grabbed immediately and were carried home or used for reading during a quiet moment under the tree. Students were then able to respond to their books with the help of the arts teachers. Posters, mobiles, ads, slide shows, and new songs were just some of the ways books were shared individually.

However, common experiences, based on books everyone knew through reading, seeing a film or listening to a tape, lent themselves most readily to an arts focus. One of the first books we tried was Drummer Hoff (Emberly).

With the entire group we viewed the Weston Woods film version which is exactly like the book. After eliciting initial responses, we asked the children to watch again and pay particular attention to:

- the story line
- the repetition of language
- the use of illustrations
- the development of the story
- the climax
- the characterizations

Each of these points was then discussed. Examples of other familiar stories and music were used to further illustrate. We then divided the students into four groups to extend their experiences.

The visual arts group experimented with slide making. Pencil drawings were transformed into slides by using transparencies and a thermofax machine. The pictures were colored with permanent felt tip pens and fastened into a slide frame. Other slides were designed with colored acetate, cellophane and Con Tact paper. The students learned how to use the slide projector and then sequenced their slides to tell the story of Drummer Hoff.

The dance group interpreted the action of the story with movement. They studied each character and developed appropriate movements. These movements were then combined in a composition which paralleled the action of the story.

Children in the drama group selected a favorite character to portray. After close investigation, the children created a costume and applied theatrical make-up to create a more realistic characterization. The words of the book were arranged in a choral composition and finally the group performed Drummer Hoff.

The music group also examined characterization, and represented each personality with a sound. Children were able to experiment with a variety of instruments and sound-makers until they could decide upon one. Next, the children created a short arrangement to depict the "theme" of their character. Finally, the arrangements were strung together to tell the story of Drummer Hoff in yet another way.

The four groups were then brought together to simultaneously "perform" the story of Drummer Hoff. Of course, the execution was not polished. But, our purpose was in the process not the product. Children who participated, "know" Drummer Hoff and will always have a special feeling about the book.

We selected several other books last summer to use with the entire group. Fortunately, we have enough paperbacks so that each child can have a copy. We also utilized Miller Brody recordings to help children become familiar with the stories. From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (Konigsburg) led to a trip to the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts to examine the feelings portrayed in paintings. While there, the students also hunted for hiding places and for sculptures for which they

had photographic clues. The Twenty-One Balloons (DuBois) lent itself to much music-making, exploration of chain reaction in movement and a video-taped "teaser" which consisted of students' drawings of the high points of the story. Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak) resulted in stand-up body puppets, "wild thing" make-up and costumes and a frenzy of movement and music during the rumpus! Finally, The Shadow of a Bull (Wojciechowska) inspired experimentation with a muleta and a sound-accompanied animated film of a bullfight with a surprise ending.

As you have probably surmised, we enjoy a rather pleasant teaching situation. We have a small pupil-teacher ratio, plenty of space and nothing but support from our supervisors. Our team works well together and although we spend many hours planning and preparing on our own time, we really enjoy what we're doing!

However, this process can be adapted to a single-teacher classroom quite easily. Last spring several teachers experimented with some of our paperbacks. At first the reading was voluntary. Any student who wanted to participate was welcome. Most teachers reported that by the second or third book, everyone in the class was involved.

I prepared folders for each book set containing information about the author and illustrator and ten to twelve ideas for ways students could respond to the book through the arts and language arts. The suggestions were directed to the students and always encouraged an original response. After

using these folders last year and making additions and changes suggested by teachers and students, they are now bound and available to classroom teachers who wish to use them.

Some of the most popular titles include The High King (Alexander), The Incredible Journey (Burnford), The Summer of the Swans (Byars), The Twenty-One Balloons (DuBois), The Saturdays and The Four Story Mistake (Enright), From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (Konigsburg), A Wrinkle in Time (L'Engle), The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe (Lewis), Pushcart War (Merrill), Sing Down the Moon (O'Dell), The Witch of Blackbird Pond (Spreare), Call It Courage (Sperry), The Bully of Barkham Street and The Dog on Barkham Street (Stolz), Charlotte's Web (White), and Shadow of a Bull (Wojciechowska).

Many of the children who participated wrote me notes in June:

"Thank you very much for letting us read the books. There were four I liked the most. Dog on Barkham Street, The Saturdays, Summer of the Swans and The Four Story Mistake. I liked Edward the best. He seemed cute and funny. These books have helped me read better and I'm beginning to really like reading. I'm going to buy alot of these books this summer and read them again. I'm also going to tell my friends and cousins about these books!"

"I like to thank you for sending those books. I liked the High King more than any other. You sent seven but I only read five. But, thay were better than any books I have read in years. I just like to thank you for leting us read them."

"Thank you very much for sending all those great books. I really enjoyed them. My favorite one was The Twenty-One Balloons. It was very entertaining. All the books were new to me and I thouroly enjoyed them."

"I really had fun reading the books you sent us. The ones I liked the best were High King and Dog on Barkham Street. I got the biggest paper back library at home and as soon as school is out I'm going to read like mad! I have a few of the books you sent us already. I was amazed how The Bully of Barkham Street and The Dog on Barkham Street showed two points of view!"

The students involved in the summer and winter program are making friends with books they'll never forget! And, they're becoming mad about good books in the process!

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